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OBITUARY



## Obituary: Rui Alberto Mateus Pereira (Lisbon, 13 August 1957–Azeitão, 19 March 2020)


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**Rui Alberto Mateus Pereira** (Lisbon, 13 August 1957–Azeitão, 19 March 2020) was a professor in the Department of Anthropology and a researcher at the Institute of Contemporary History at FCSH-NOVA, Lisbon, in Portugal. His research was grounded in the discipline of anthropology, but also included the historical context of Portuguese colonialism, such as the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. The essay ‘Introduction to 1998’s Reedition’ (‘Introdução à Reedição de 1998’), which he wrote for the book *Os Macondes de Moçambique* (*The Makonde of Mozambique*),<sup>1</sup> was the most detailed and best written text of his time on this subject, presenting the contextualisation of the work of the anthropologist Jorge Dias (1907–1973) in Mozambique. Rui Pereira analysed the work of anthropology during the colonial period and particularly during the Estado Novo (1933–1974), from a comparative and critical point of view, while pointing the way to new fields of research. He drew attention, for instance, to the need to distinguish the scientific work carried out (and published) by Jorge Dias from the confidential reports the latter wrote for the Portuguese regime, in which he warned the colonial administration about the tensions and conflicts permeating the ‘colonial field’.

From the late 1990s onwards, there has been a more systematic growth in studies of the various domains of Portuguese colonialism, including the history of colonial anthropology. In this regard, the work of Rui Pereira was inspiring and became a foundation for subsequent research. Rui Pereira obtained his PhD in anthropology at FCSH-NOVA in 2005, with a thesis titled ‘Conhecer para Dominar: o Desenvolvimento do Conhecimento Antropológico na Política Colonial Portuguesa em Moçambique, 1926–1959’ (‘Knowing in Order to Dominate: The Development of Anthropological Knowledge in

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1. R.M. Pereira, ‘Introdução à reedição de 1998’, in J. Dias, *Os Macondes de Moçambique*, vol. I (Lisbon: CNCDP/IICT, 1998), V-LII.

Portuguese Colonial Policy in Mozambique, 1926–1959’).<sup>2</sup> According to Pereira, the work of some Portuguese anthropologists contributed to the permanence of Portuguese colonial rule in its African territories, especially in Mozambique, the colony in which anthropology became more politically consequential. Rui Pereira argued that the survey of ‘indigenous uses and customs’ in Mozambique also contributed to the domination of colonised populations in the sense that these studies often sought to highlight their civilisational difference, thus justifying their domination and subjugation. For Pereira, the classification and hierarchies produced by the colonality of anthropological knowledge still influenced the post-independence period, including the years of the Mozambican Civil War (1977–1992), and are still partly associated with the political tensions in Mozambique in recent years.

Rui Pereira carried out several research projects that took him to various parts of the globe to do fieldwork. Yet it was not only colonial knowledge that attracted his attention as a topic of study. He was also one of the coordinators of the book *Centenário da Gripe Pneumónica: A Pandemia em Retrospectiva, Portugal 1918–1919* (*Centenary of the Pneumonic Flu: The Pandemic in Retrospective, Portugal 1918–1919*) with Helena da Silva and Filomena Bandeira, published in 2019.<sup>3</sup> In that book, he authored the chapter ‘Ricardo Jorge, o mal-amado: Os serviços de saúde militar no quadro da Grande Guerra e da Gripe Pneumónica’ (‘Ricardo Jorge, the Unloved: The Military Health Service in the Context of the Great War and the Pneumonic Flu’), which shows his interest in archival research and social history.

In terms of editorial projects, he served as editorial director in periodical publications in the areas of history and anthropology (*Oceanos*; *Camões*; *Cadernos de Estudos Africanos*). He was also a founder, and served as vice president, of the Portuguese Association of Anthropology (1986–1990).

Pereira also wrote about the processes of creating African collections in museums. He was a member of the scientific committee of various exhibitions, having also contributed as an author to various exhibition catalogues. Amongst the exhibitions he worked on were the following:

- ‘As Áfricas de Pancho Guedes: Coleção de Dori e Amâncio Guedes’ (‘The Africas of Pancho Guedes: The Dori and Amâncio Guedes Collection’), (Santa Clara Market, Lisbon City Hall, 2011);
- ‘África. Diálogo Mestiço/Africa. Mestizo Dialogue, Coleção de Arte Tribal de José de Guimarães’ (‘José de Guimarães’ Tribal Art Collection’), (Lisbon City Hall, 2009);
- ‘Centenary of the Republican Council in Lisbon 1908–2008’ (Lisbon City Hall, 2008);
- Museological Nucleus of the Castle of São Jorge, where he served as the scientific

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2. R.M. Pereira, ‘Conhecer para Dominar: O Desenvolvimento do Conhecimento Antropológico na Política Colonial Portuguesa em Moçambique, 1926–1959’ (PhD Thesis, NOVA University Lisbon).  
 3. H. Silva, R.M. Pereira, and F. Bandeira, *Centenário da Gripe Pneumónica: A Pandemia em Retrospectiva, Portugal 1918–1919* (Lisbon: IGAS/IHC/CNCP, 2019).

coordinator of the museological project (Lisbon, 2007–2008);

- 'Portugal in the Opening of the World' (Royal College of Art, London, 1993);
- 'Nas Vésperas do Mundo Moderno – sociedades africanas e brasileiras nos séculos XVI a XVIII' ('On the Vespers of the Modern World – African and Brazilian Societies from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century') where he served as the scientific commissioner and executive producer (National Museum of Ethnology, Lisbon, 1992);
- 'Die Kultur der Portugiesischen Entdeckungen' ('The Culture of the Portuguese Discoveries') (Strauhof Museum, Zurich, 1992);
- 'Índios da Amazônia' ('Indians of the Amazon'), with Benjamim Enes Pereira and Fernando Santos (National Museum of Ethnology, Lisbon, 1986).

Additionally, Rui Pereira had a career as a public manager in positions linked to central and local administrations in Portugal. He was an advisor to the National Commission for the Commemoration of the Portuguese Discoveries; Director of children and youth programming at Pavilhão de Portugal (Portuguese Pavilion) at Expo '98; Programming Director within the Portuguese Committee for the Universal Exhibition in Seville in 1992; Coordinator of the project 'Traditional Arts and Crafts', Ministry of Education (1988–1989); Director of the Portuguese Institute for Book and Libraries (IPLB/Ministry of Culture) (2002–2005); Municipal Director of Culture of the Municipality of Lisbon (2004–2009); Municipal Director of Human Resources of the Municipality of Lisbon (until 2011); and President of the Executive Board of the Institute of Financial Management and Justice Equipment (Ministry of Justice) (2012–2015).

Rui Pereira's research in the field of colonialism, post-colonialism and colonality was rich and innovative, especially regarding the history and politics of anthropological knowledge in Mozambique. Unfortunately, part of it remains unpublished. It will be up to a new generation of scholars to rescue some of these works and bring them to light.